

Sin-Kiang

Mongols & Moslems of Chinese Turkistan

By Sir George Macartney, K.C.I.E.

British Consul-General at Kashgar, 1910-18

THAN Sin-Kiang (or Sin-chiang, Hsin-chiang), its westernmost dominion, no province of China offers a wider field of interest, physiographic, political, or ethnic.

Here is the converging point of diverse cultures—Chinese, Mongol, Turk, Russian, Indian, Tibetan; and just as the designs on a Yarkand carpet are a hodge-podge of alien arts, so the native who made the carpet is himself largely a product of different foreign elements, social and racial; a fact as true of his past as of his present.

This immense tract, probably in total area as large as France and the Iberian Peninsula combined, is wedged in, on the north, by Western Mongolia and on the south by Northern Tibet and the British Indian territory of Kashmir. The Tian Shan (Heavenly Mountains), which run horizontally across Sin-Kiang, divides it into two unequal parts, viz., Zungaria on the north of the range and Eastern Turkistan on the south side of it.

Zungaria has an area of some 150,000 square miles, and therefore is rather larger than the British Isles. It is an immense plain, enclosed between the Altai Mountains on the north, and the Tian Shan Range on the south; while, on the west, it borders on the Russian Turkistan province of Semiryetchensk, and on the east merges into the plateau of Mongolia.

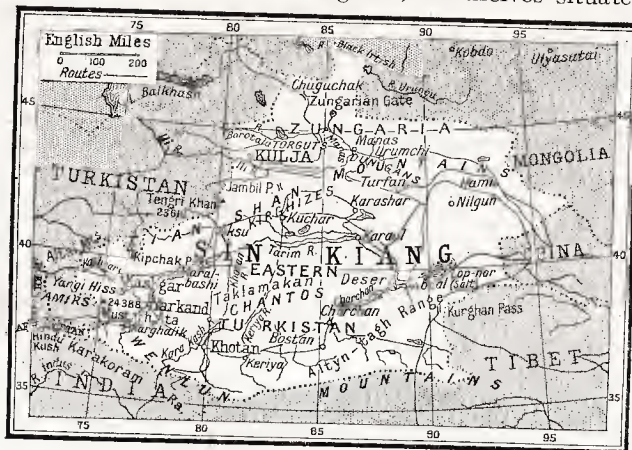
On the side of Mongolia, the plain is about 2,500 feet high; but it slopes down to 700 feet near the Siberian border at the

Zungarian Gate—that strange and, indeed, only corridor in the 3,000 miles long mountain-wall stretching from the Hindu Kush right into Manchuria.

Most of the country is a desert, wherein only tamarisk and saxual will grow, with here and there patches of sand dunes and of ground incrustated with salt and inclined to be swampy.

Though the plains receive but a slight rainfall, moisture-bearing winds blow from the steppes of southern Siberia; and as these impinge on the crests of the Altai and of the Tian Shan, they bring rain to those slopes which are turned towards Zungaria, calling forth a luxuriant growth of pine forests and green pastures on the highlands, and creating a succession of fertile oases lower down. Mongolia, however, on the one hand, and Eastern Turkistan on the other, remain dry and bare.

Generally speaking, Zungaria is a mountain-girt region; and as a consequence most of the rivers, such as the Borotala, the Emil, the Urungu, and the Manas, have no outlet except into lakes and lagoons, themselves situated





ROCKING YOUNG TURKISTAN TO SLEEP IN HIS CURIOUS CRADLE

On this roughly-fashioned structure a Sin-Kiang native has placed a mattress with soft cushion and coverlet, forming a comfortable couch for her youngest born. Here he sleeps securely; two wide cloth bands preventing him from slipping over the precipitous sides of his primitive cot, while a light cloth thrown curtain-wise over the framework will protect him when necessary from sun or flies

Photo, Miss Ella Sykes

in the country. The Irtysh, however, which has its source here, makes a notable exception by flowing into the Arctic Ocean. So does the Ili river, destined perhaps one day to notoriety in the "oil" world; in the meantime, undisturbed, its mouth (at the southern extremity of Lake Balhash) reeks with the odour of the petroleum which oozes out of the bed of the lake to float on the surface.

Situated as Zungaria is on the confines of China proper, Mongolia, Russian Central Asia and Eastern Turkistan, its population is naturally a mixed one. The oldest and principal race are the

Mongols, here divided into Kerei, Torgut, and Charkhar tribes. They are probably of the same stock as the Mongols near by, on the farther side of the Altai. Still, a religious barrier, of recent date, has sprung up between these peoples, more segregating in its action than even the mountain range itself.

The march of Islam in Central Asia has reached Zungaria, but not beyond. The cis-Altai Mongols have accepted this faith; but the trans-Altai Mongols (in Kobdo) are still under the somnolent spell of Buddhism; and there can be no doubt that, thanks to their conversion to Mahomedanism, the former have

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attained to a higher standard of life and to a higher moral code than the latter.

The Mongols of Zungaria are all nomads, living in encampments of beehive-like tents, and following their herds of sheep, yaks, horses, and camels as they are driven from one pasturage to another on the mountain slopes.

The inhabitants of the oases at the foot of the Altai and Tian Shan Mountains live in five or six fairly densely populated centres. These are Urumchi, essentially a Chinese town, the capital of the Sin-Kiang province, and the seat of the Chinese governor; Manas, a large agricultural district, through which the river of the same name spreads itself out like a fan into thousands of irrigation channels; Chuguchak, near the Zungarian Gate on the Russo-Chinese border,

a place of some strategical importance by reason of its being the only opening in the Tian Shan between Russia and Eastern China; and the old and new towns of Kulja, with about 100,000 inhabitants—famous in the eyes of Chinese diplomats, in that China wrested them back from Russia in 1881, after a decade of Russian occupation.

Apart from the Mongols already mentioned, the people one sees about the towns are Chantos, Tartars, Chinese, and Dungans. The Chantos are natives from Eastern Turkistan (the southern portion of Sin-Kiang), here settled as merchants, or cultivators, or labourers. The Tartars are Russian Mahomedans from Kazan. Dressed in their tight-fitting coats, which button closely round the neck, with small skull caps on the head, and



WEEPING WOMEN AT THE SHRINE OF KASHGAR'S ROYAL SAINT

About a couple of miles north of the old town of Kashgar, beyond the river, is the shrine of Hazrat Afak, a saintly king who died in 1693—an imposing mausoleum faced with blue and white glazed tiles. A mosque, monastery, and college were erected around it by the Ameer Yakub Bey, who reigned 1864-77, and the whole enclosed within orchards, fruit gardens, and vineyards

Photo, Miss Ella Sykes



CHANTOS MAKING THE WOODEN SUPPORTS TO A NEW BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER KASHGAR IN EASTERN TURKISTAN
 The southern portion of Sin-Kiang is the home of the Chantos, people of the plains who make a livelihood as merchants, cultivators, or labourers. In these various capacities they may be found throughout the province, chiefly in the northern regions, where many have settled in the bigger towns and villages. Here a party of them is seen engaged in constructing a bridge across the Kashgar, a river watering the most fertile portion of the province, and an affluent of the Tarin, which, gathering up many streams into a large channel, makes its way through the thirsty soil of the vast central plain to be finally absorbed in Lake Lop-nor.

Photo, Sir George Macartney



SMILING KIRGHIZ AT THE DOOR OF THEIR TEMPORARY ABODE

Always on the move from pasture to pasture the nomadic Kirghiz cumber themselves with a minimum of household gear. They live in circular tents, in the summer built of kamish (reeds) covered with felt, and in winter often constructed of clay. Having no windows or chimneys, these huts are dark and filled with the pungent smoke from the burnt yaks' dung chiefly used as fuel

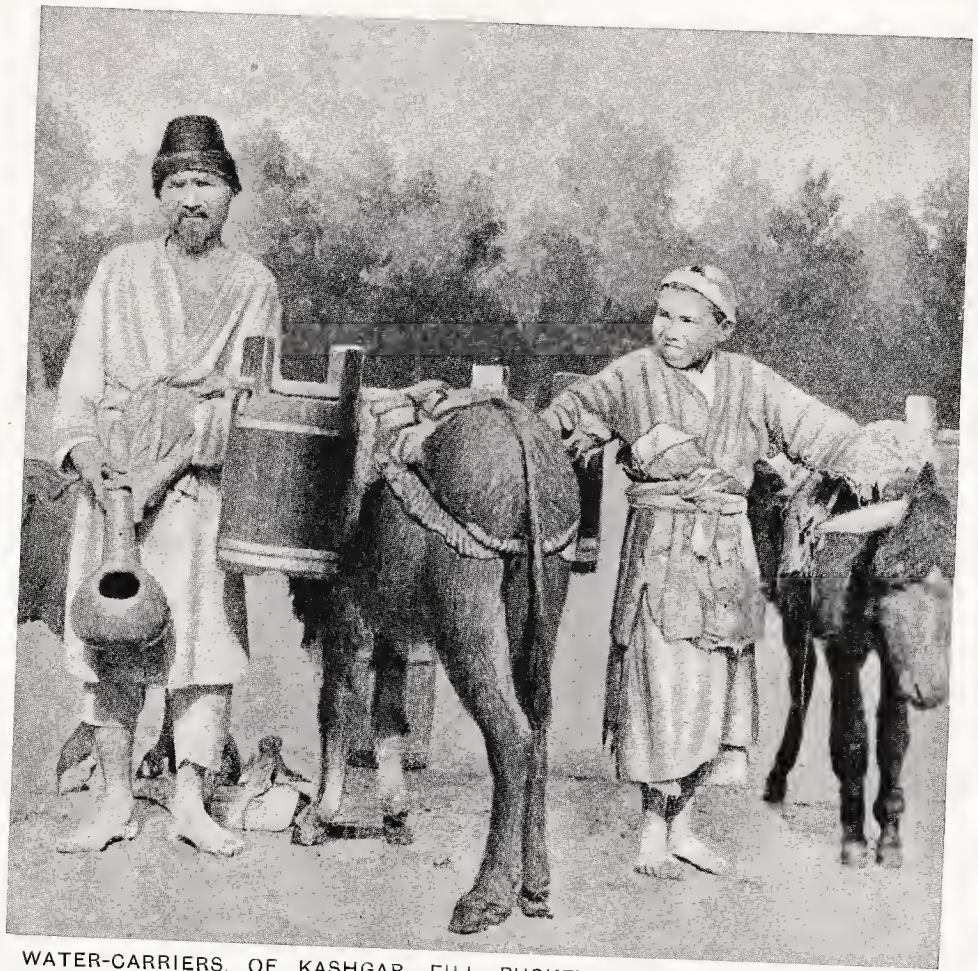
Photo, Sir George Macartney

long jack boots on the feet, they may be seen all over Zungaria, selling Russian chintz goods, taking in return, among other things, marmot skins, here to be had for about 2d. a piece—later on to be fashioned, perhaps in London, into ladies' imitation sable coats.

But the people who really exercise an influence in the country are the Chinese and Dungans. The former temporarily settle here either as officials, pawn-brokers, moneylenders, or merchants importing Chinese and foreign wares from Tientsin. They lord it over the natives, who bow and cringe before them. With wonderful facility, they

adapt themselves to their alien surroundings; yet they deviate in nothing from their own usages and customs, remembering all the time that here they are sojourners, not settlers. They make their "pile," and take it all away; for back to their native provinces in Inner China they nearly all go—alive, or in coffins.

As for the Dungans, they are Chinese Mahomedans from the neighbouring province of Kansu. Here they are settled as farmers, mostly at Manas, the agricultural centre of Zungaria. Apart from a common religion, they and the local native Mahomedans have but



WATER-CARRIERS OF KASHGAR FILL BUCKETS BY THE TUMAN'S BRIM
 What is known as the "old town" of Kashgar overlooks the River Tuman and is called Kuhna Shahr. The man and boy with their shaggy, hard-bitten donkeys are fetching water from the Tuman, on whose bank they stand. The pipe-shaped implement in the hands of the man is a kind of dipper for filling the buckets

Photo, Sir Percy Sykes

little mutual sympathy. Outwardly the Dungans look just like the Celestials. They live in much the same style, eating with chop-sticks, though of course the flesh of the swine is taboo for them. Their language is Chinese, and their calligraphy also; even their mosques, some with pagoda-looking minarets and turned-up roofs, betray in their construction the influence of Chinese architecture. In refinement, the Dungans are decidedly inferior to the Chinese; but of the two they are the more virile, also the more truculent and crafty. The records of the relations of the two peoples are studded with instances of

fierce revolts on the one side and of savage repressions on the other.

Eastern Turkistan is also known as Chinese Turkistan, Higher Tartary, The Seven Cities, or The Tarim Basin. It is, not unlike Zungaria, a mountain-girt plain, though on a much larger scale; but whereas the Zungarian plain descends from east to west, that of Turkistan trends downwards from west to east; the height at Kashgar (west) is about 4,500 feet, while at Lop-nor (east) it is only about 2,000 feet.

The general elevation of the country is therefore considerably above sea-level; yet it is extraordinary that there

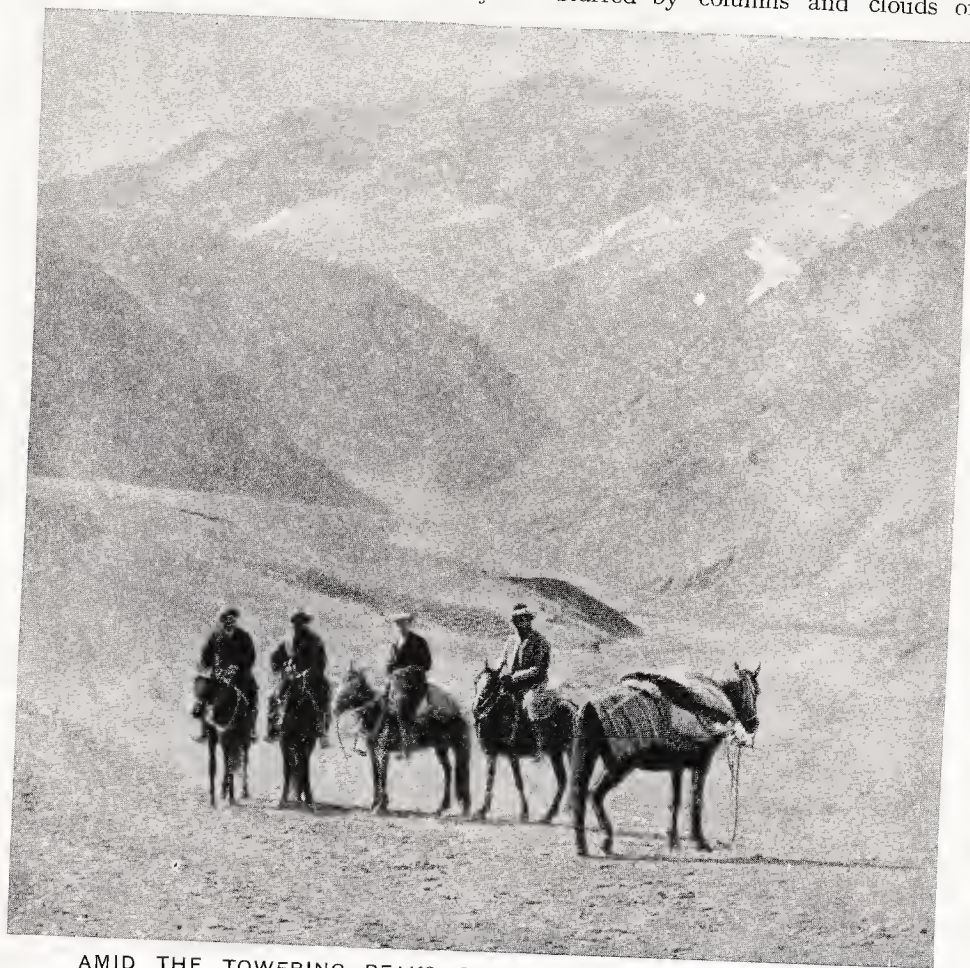
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is one populous centre that is actually some 50 feet below that level, viz., Turfan, which, no doubt through some strange tension or rifting in the earth's crust, has so sunk into a sort of gully as to have earned for itself the reputation of being the lowest situated place in the whole of Central Asia.

The plain of Turkistan has all the characteristics of a sea-bed; indeed, during the Tertiary or earlier Quarternary period, it was covered by an immense mid-continental lake, of which Lop-nor—the reedy swamp into which what rivers there are in the country

drain—is a small and much shrunken survival. Now, nearly the whole of this erstwhile sea-bottom is a dreary sandy waste, where not a tree, not a blade of grass, not a bird, not an animal is to be seen.

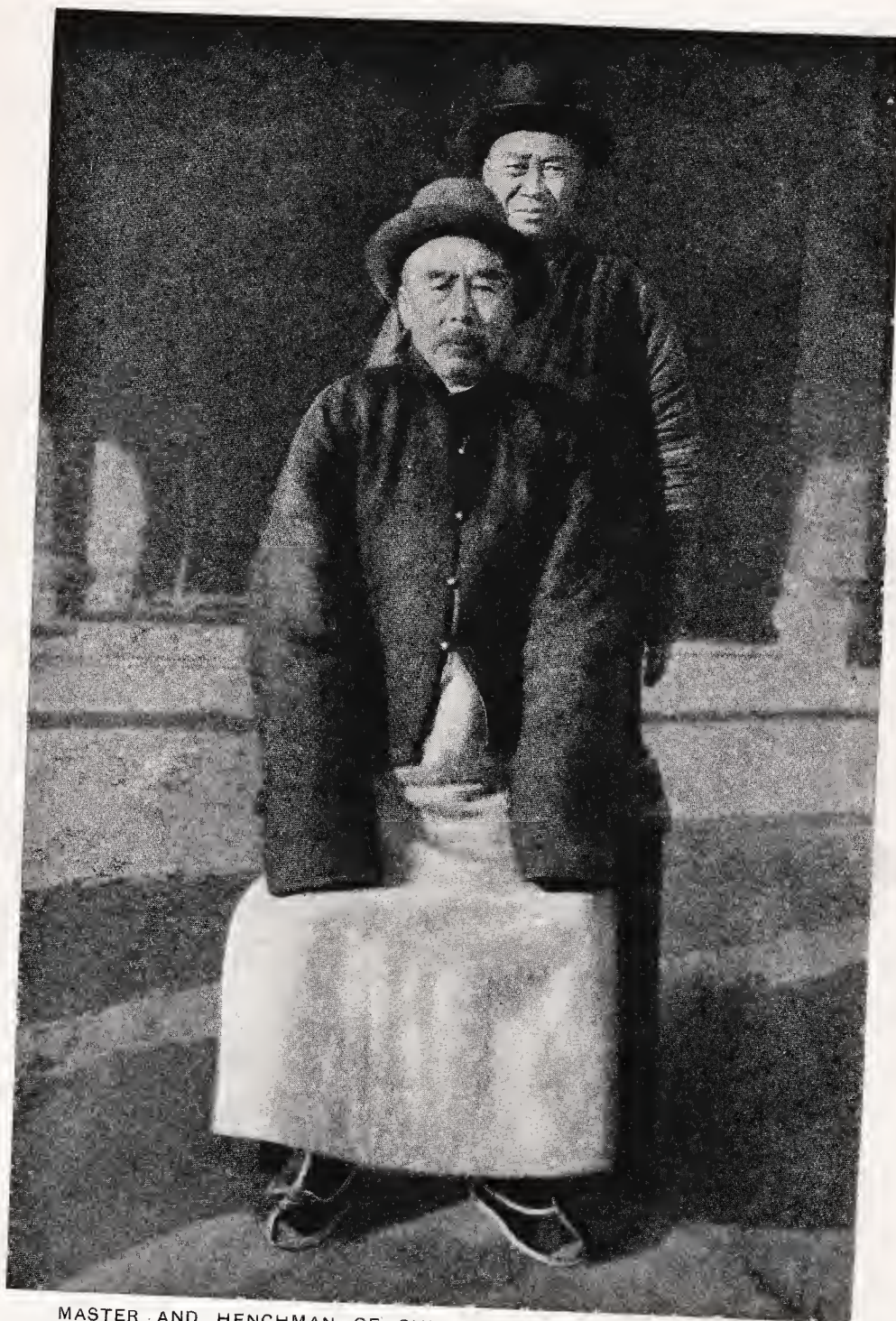
As far as the eye can scan into the boundless space it sees a panorama of sand dunes, here sinking into deep troughs and gullies, there raising their crests mountain high; now the whole scene glitters in a sun rendered all the more fierce and stifling by a heat-retaining haze of an ashy-pale colour; now it is blurred by columns and clouds of



AMID THE TOWERING PEAKS OF THE CELESTIAL MOUNTAINS

Superb scenery glorifies the entire range of the Tian Shan, the vast mountain chain that extends for nearly a thousand miles across Asia, with heights of as much as twenty-three thousand feet. The main road from Russian into Chinese territory runs south from Semipalatinsk to Chuguchak near the Zungarian Gate on the Russo-Chinese border, and thence east into China through Suchow

Photo, Sir George Macartney



MASTER AND HENCHMAN OF CHINESE OFFICIALDOM AT YARKAND
Chinese officials are scattered in considerable numbers throughout the length and breadth of Sinkiang; but the vast administrative system is centred at Ili, the capital, where reside the Civil Governor and the head officials. The inhabitants, comprising nearly two million persons of hardy and excellent physique, though varied in nationality and creed are not fanatical and are easily ruled

Photo, Sir Percy Sykes



WHERE THE EAGLE IS TRAINED "TO STOOP DOWN TO THE FIST"

Seeming as it soars in space a very incarnation of proud freedom, the eagle has yet been so far subjugated by man as to learn to kill game for its master. In Chinese Turkistan eagles are quite commonly used to kill antelopes, wolves, and foxes, being carried hooded on the wrist and released when the quarry is in view. A well-trained eagle has been valued at the price of two camels

Photo, Miss Ella Sykes

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sand travelling across the desert like a hurricane, and obscuring the sky, so that day is changed into night.

Such is the Taklamakan Desert, and it forms the core of the country.

But between the actual desert and the mountains, which hold it as in the bottom of a basin, lies a belt of land less forbidding. It is mostly formed of Piedmont gravel, and no doubt it was the shore or beach of the whilom Tertiary Sea. Along this belt, but separated from each other by sandy wastes, are patches of ground covered with a friable and brownish-yellow soil, known as loess, which here is composed partly of alluvium from the mountains and partly of dust, which the storms of centuries have winnowed from the sands of the neighbouring desert and showered down over the land in "blood rain."

The soil is therefore largely of aeolian origin. It is eminently fertile; and as the rivers issuing from the encircling mountains yield a plentiful supply of water for irrigation, a string of oases,

nestling close to the foot of the mountains on the one side, and stretching out on the other to the sand dunes of the Taklamakan Desert, have come into existence, some recently, others dating from a remote past.

It is on this loess soil that are situated such towns as Hami, Turfan, Karashar, and Kucha on the north; Aksu, Maralbashi, Kashgar, Yangi Hissar, Yarkand, and Karghalik on the west; Khotan, Keriya, and Charchan on the south.

The mountains by which the plain of Turkistan is walled in are in shape like a huge horse-shoe, with the toe turned west, and they are among the highest in the world. On the north and north-west is the Tian Shan, first dividing Eastern Turkistan from Zungaria, then forming a line of demarcation between Chinese and Russian territories. On the south is the Kwenlun, another mighty range, forming a buttress to the lofty plateau of Tibet. The Tian Shan and the Kwenlun do not meet, however; but a junction is effected between



PUPILS OF KASHGAR'S CHIEF SCHOOL STUDYING THE KORAN

Kashgar has long been famed as a political and commercial centre of Chinese Turkistan. It consists of two parts, Kuhna Shahr, or the "old city," and Yangi Shahr, or "new city," built by the Chinese in 1838. The mixed population of the old city, estimated at some thirty thousand, is composed largely of Moslem Turks, whose ability and activity have helped to develop many of its industries

Photo, Sir Percy Sykes



BOUND FOR KASHGAR MARKET WITH FRESH MELONS

Although so much of Sin-Kiang is absolutely arid desert the soil in the oases at the foot of the mountains around the Tarim basin is highly fertile. Careful irrigation has made the oasis in which Kashgar is situated famous as orchard land, where most of the fruits that succeed in Europe grow and ripen well. Melons in particular reach a perfection rarely attained elsewhere

Photo, Miss Ella Sykes

them by a tangle of ranges (the Karakoram, the Mustagh-Ata, the Hindu Kush, and the Pamirs) that has been variously called "The Roof of the World," the "Central Boss of Asia," or, in classical geography, the "Imaos."

In this massif is situated, on the borders of Baltistan (British-Indian territory) and Chinese Turkistan, the snow-clad peak for a long time obscurely known as K2, but now recognized as the second highest mountain in the world (28,278 feet), under the name of Mount Godwin-Austen.

And here, in their cradles of ice, are nursed to torrential strength the faint beginnings of three mighty rivers—the Indus, the Oxus, and the Yarkand, all bringers of fertility to vast regions. Here, too, amid the crags on which

the Ovis Poli and the ibex roam, India, China, Russia, and Afghanistan meet on a fourfold border, their outposts, each in its own segment, jealously keeping watch and ward.

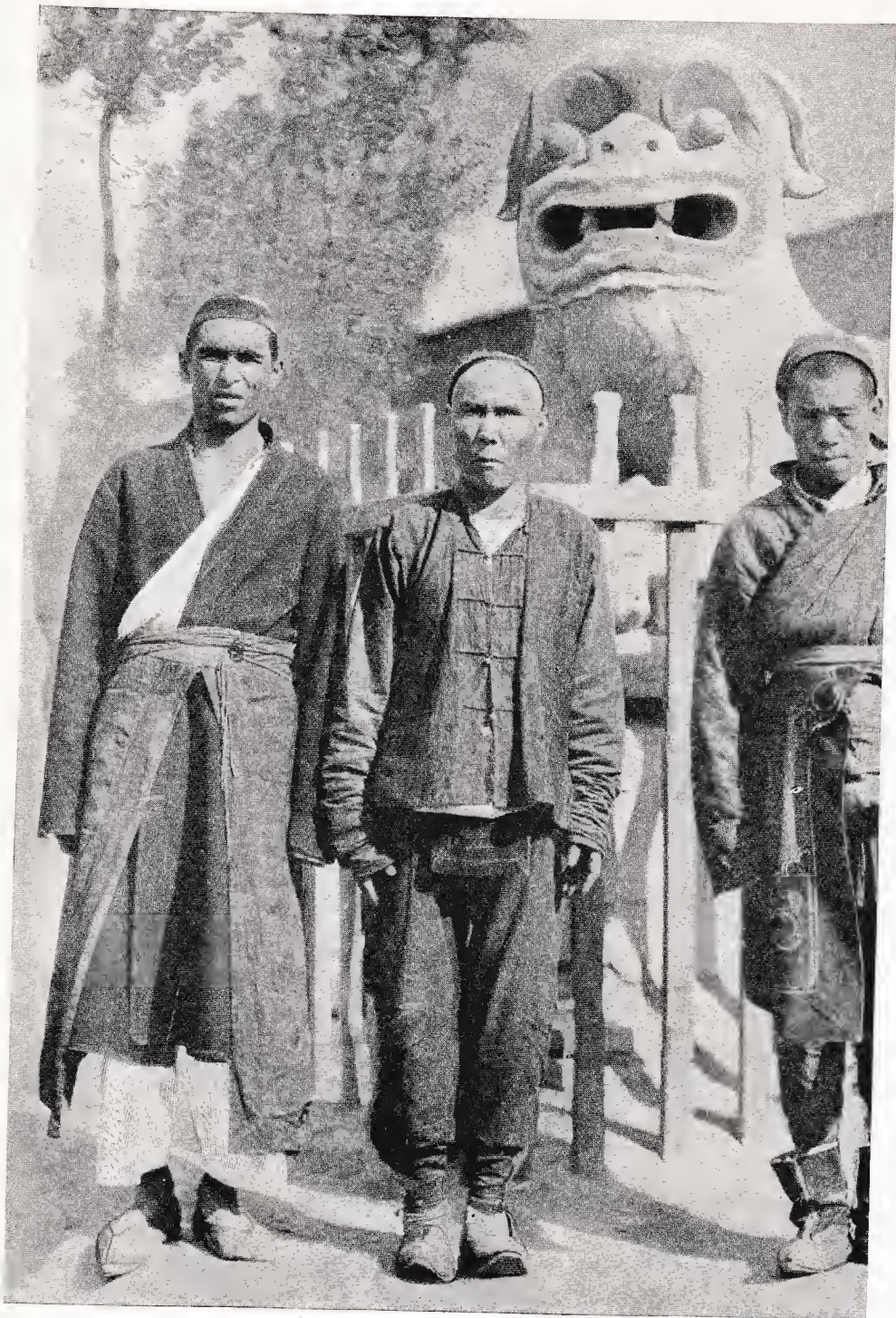
The peoples of Eastern Turkistan are the Kirghiz of the mountains and the Chantos of the plains.

The lower portions of the mountains of Eastern Turkistan are generally rough, craggy, and barren; owing to the almost total absence of rain in this belt, the soil undergoes no denudation; and what streams there are from the upper regions force their way through to the plains in narrow, precipitous, sharp-cut V-shaped gorges, filled with boulders. These gorges are but sparsely inhabited. But higher up, somewhat below the snow-line, at from 8,000 to



PATIENT TILLERS OF THE FERTILE SOIL AROUND KASHGAR
Natives of the plains, the Chantos live in villages round about the towns of Eastern Turkistan, dwelling in comfortable farmhouses and cultivating their small, carefully-irrigated fields. Of mixed blood they are a strong, hardy race, rather European than Mongoloid in appearance. Their common dress is a garment of coarse cotton cloth called "kham," padded with cotton and quilted in winter

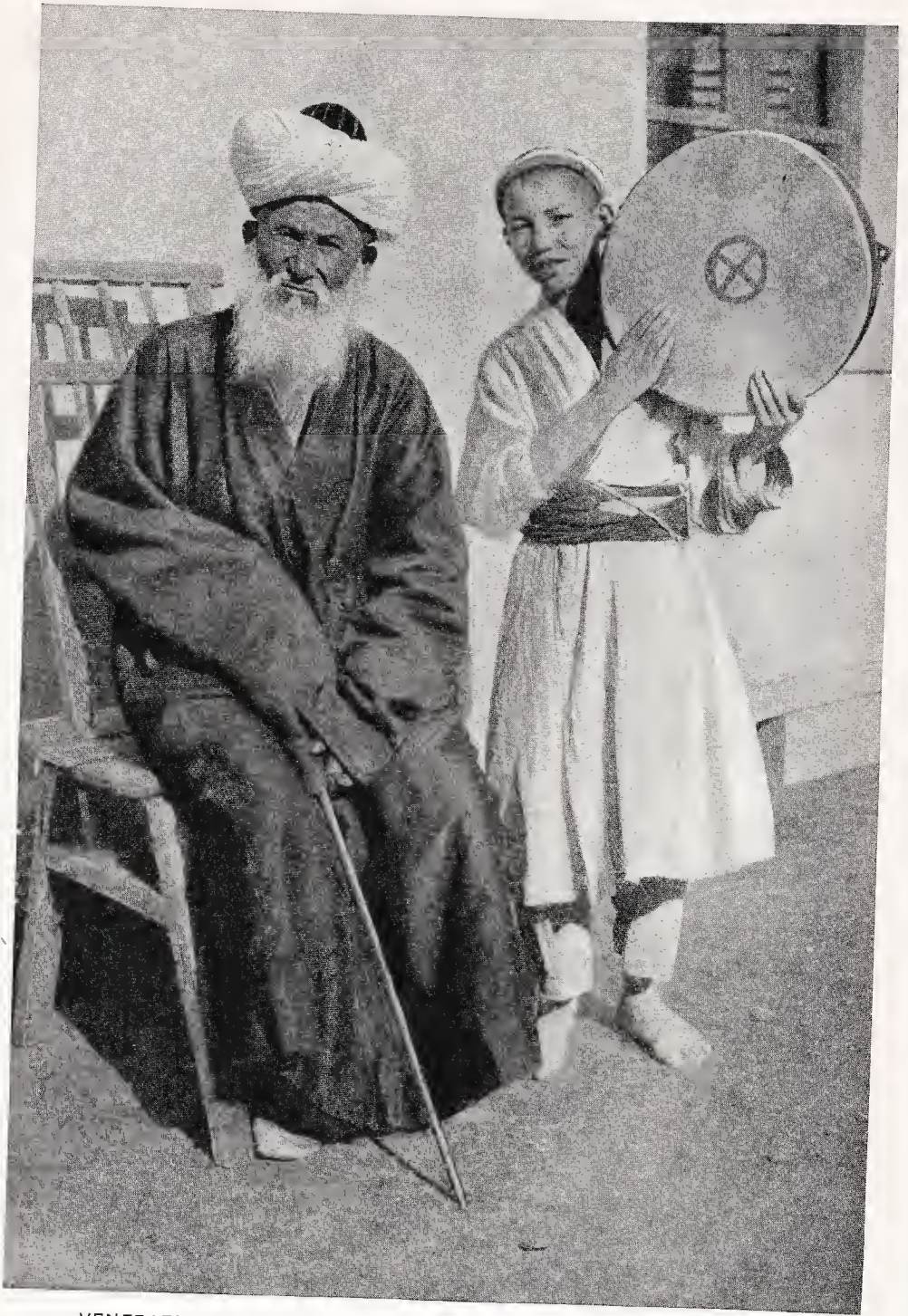
Photo, Sir Percy Sykes



QUAINT GUARDIANS OF THE STATE OUTSIDE THE KASHGAR YAMEN

There are generally two distinct cities in the towns of Turkistan, one Mahomedan, the other Chinese. In the latter the Chinese resident officers have their yamens, or official residences, the staff including numerous guards, runners, banner-carriers, and native interpreters. Ferocious beasts moulded in clay and whitened surround the seat of government at Kashgar, supposedly to ward off evil spirits

Photo, Sir Percy Sykes



VENERABLE MAGICIAN OF SIN-KIANG AND HIS YOUNG ADEPT

Many a strange cult, reminiscent of the demonology of aboriginal Asia, prevails among the tribes inhabiting the province of Sin-Kiang. Sickness is usually reckoned to be the result of a spell cast by an enemy; a soothsayer is then employed, whose supernatural insight is supposed to enable him to discover the enemy and remove the spell, thus curing the unfortunate person of his malady

Photo, Sir Percy Sykes



MATERNAL PRIDE AND INFANT COYNESS BY THE YARKAND RIVER

Most of the inhabitants of the oases of Eastern Turkistan are of Turkish stock with a strong Aryan strain. Their language is Yagatai Turkish, and they are loosely classified as Uzbeks and Sarts, the former being the more aristocratic urban dwellers and the latter the urban commonalty. Many of them are of prepossessing appearance, and the children are often delightful little creatures

Photo, Miss Ella Sykes



TOWNSWOMAN OF KASHGAR

Many races meet and mix in the town of Kashgar with its thirty thousand citizens. A Tartar strain is apparent in this somewhat forbidding face

Photo, Miss Ella Sykes

about 13,000 feet altitude, the mountains often open out into broad valleys, smoothed and enlarged by the action of ice at some remote geological period, and now covered with luxuriant grass and Alpine flowers.

Here a people of a Mongol-Tartar stock make their abode—a people squat-built, but mostly fair in complexion, with small slanting eyes, high cheek-

bones, broad nose, but little or no beard. These are the nomadic Kirghiz; and when in the vicinity of any of their encampments, one is forcibly reminded of the fact not only by the eyes, but also nose and ears. The not particularly agreeable exhalations of cattle, the pungent smell of burnt yaks' dung rising with the smoke as it floats out of the centre of circular felt-covered tents, the chorus set up by the barking of dogs, the bleating of sheep, the grunting of yaks, the whinnying of mares, the wailing of camels—all betoken the temporary station of some herdsman.

To-day, his encampment is here; to-morrow, if the grass be consumed, it flits to another pasturage; the last place is deserted, and no trace of recent habitation is left except, here and there, a heap of ashes in the centre of a circle of down-trodden turf marking where a tent had stood. In such wise the Kirghiz may be seen, living under almost identical conditions, all over the mountains of Turkistan, some at rest in encampments, others on their migrations with women astride on camels, tiny children hardly bigger than babies sitting sturdily on horseback, and with household paraphernalia of cooking pots, tents, felts, carpets, cradles, bowls, buckets hewn out of solid tree trunks, all tied on the backs of pack animals.

In these altitudes, where the air is rarefied and breathing is distressful, no beast of burden is more suitable than the yak—an ox with long silky hair, a bushy mane, and a long tail. It is a wonderful animal for strength and surefootedness; it will carry a load up to three hundred-weight on its back, and walk off with it over dizzy heights and precipitous crags—in fact, over places which no horse, and no man who is not a trained mountaineer, will negotiate.

A thing that strikes one very forcibly about the Kirghiz people is their completeness in themselves.

Practically everything they require comes from their own encampments. For example, their tent is home-made.



HEAD COOK AND BUTLER OF KASHGAR'S CHINESE CONSULATE

As the characteristic concomitants of a Chinese bill of fare are unobtainable in far Kashgar, the consular household lives simply till some important guest comes. Then appear hoarded delicacies, edible birds' nests and hams soaked in molasses that have been fetched hundreds of miles and at great cost from China. The cook and butler may be called upon for more than forty courses at one such banquet

Photo, Miss Ella Sykes



FAITH TREATMENT FOR A SORE CUTANEOUS DISEASE

Modern methods of medical treatment are available for the native population of Sin-Kiang only in those towns where Western philanthropy has established hospitals or medical missions. Elsewhere the people rely mainly on supernatural influences, like this woman, who is throwing mud at the wall of a shrine in the pathetic belief that thereby she may be cured of the disease which afflicts her

Photo, Sir Percy Sykes

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The framework, shaped like a huge circular birdcage with the bars latticed across each other, is formed of willow twigs collected in the jungles at the foot of the mountains. The pieces of felt which are laid over this framework, the ropes which keep the felts in position, the carpets on which the Kirghiz sleep, all are prepared by the women from the wool of sheep and goats that graze on the neighbouring hills.

As the Kirghiz lives in the midst of his herds, he is self-supporting in the matter of meat, milk, cream, and cheese; and if he wants something alcoholic, he has his koumiss to fall back on—that is, mare's milk fermented in a leather bag made out of the whole skin of a goat.

Hardy People of the Plains

The Chantos down in the plains lead a life far more complex. The people are of an Indo-European stock. But they have become mixed, through marriage, with the inhabitants of the surrounding countries, who at various periods either had invaded Turkistan, such as the Huns, Mongols, Chinese, and Tibetans, or had settled there, like the Kashmiris, the Baltistanis, the Chitralis, and the Badakhshis.

Still, even now, their features on the whole come closer to the European than to the Mongoloid type. Some of the men are decidedly good-looking, though their features are inclined to be coarse and too large; and now and again one sees a woman fair in complexion and of striking beauty. As a race they are strong and hardy, despite the ravages of venereal diseases with which almost the entire population is tainted. But, morally, they are indolent and generally lacking in substantial qualities—and this notwithstanding certain amiable traits.

The greater part of the population live in the "kishlaks" or villages surrounding the towns. Here they are cultivators; and their low, mud-walled farmhouses may be seen dotted here and there, pleasantly ensconced in the midst

of fruit trees. In Turkistan the fields are never in large unbroken stretches; they are all cut up into small level pieces, and are so arranged that one piece stands slightly higher than another, the whole being arranged like a succession of terraces. This is to allow the irrigation water to flood one field before it flows down to the next.

Fertility Dependent on Irrigation

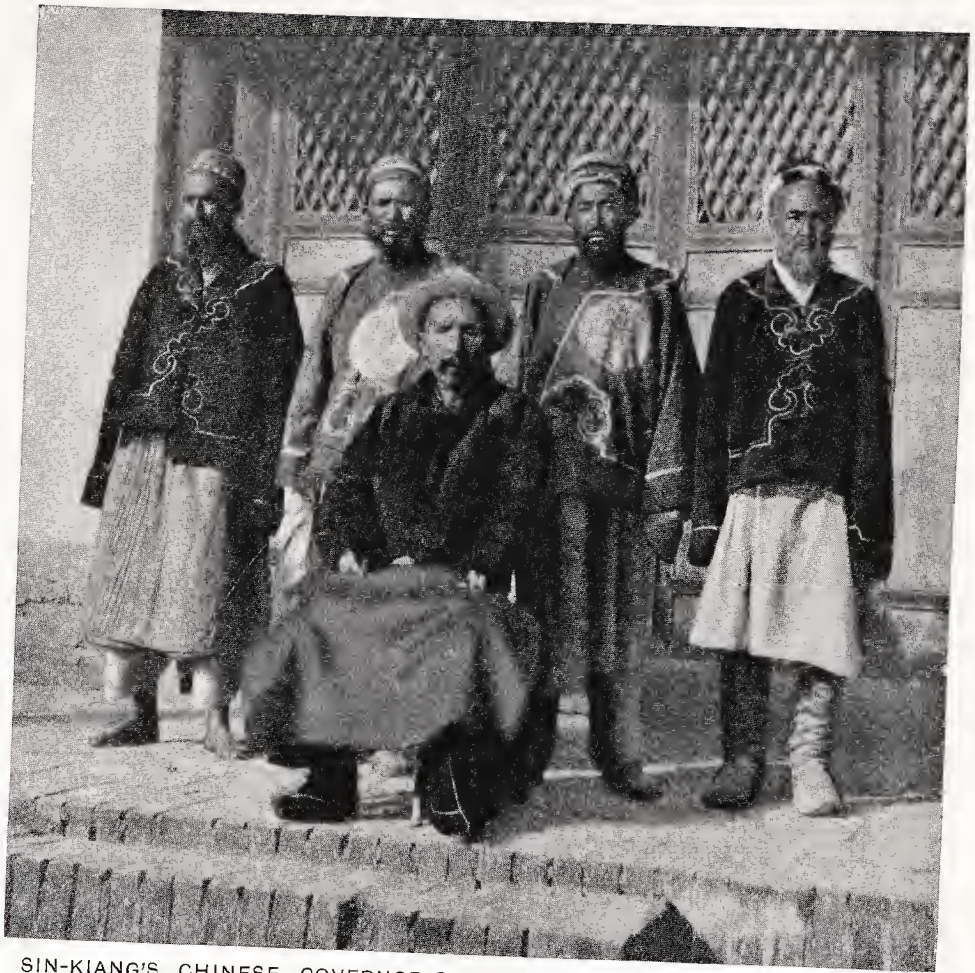
The rainfall in the plains is barely two inches in the year, and agriculture takes no account of this insignificant precipitation; but it does rely on the rivers which descend from the mighty snowfields and glaciers high up in the mountains—rivers which, as they emerge on to the plains, are dissected into a network of countless irrigation canals.

The crops grown are wheat, maize, millet, rice, linseed, and clover. The fruits are mostly those that succeed in Europe, such as walnuts, apples, apricots, pears, nectarines, peaches, plums, figs, pomegranates, grapes, mulberries, strawberries, and melons. They are all good, though not unusually so, except the melons, which certainly attain here to a degree of excellence rarely rivalled elsewhere.

Town Life, Private and Public

The towns of Turkistan mostly consist of two cities—one Chinese and one Mahomedan. They are invariably surrounded by lofty and crenellated mud walls, broad enough even at the top for a carriage and pair to be driven along them. There are three or four gateways (through the wall) for each city, and these are always in charge of some Chinese soldiers who open them at dawn and lock them at dusk.

In the Chinese city the people are mostly Chinese, and there, too, the civil and military ambans (or Chinese resident officers) have their yamens (official residences), with their staff of secretaries and clerks, and their numerous followers of native interpreters, police guard, and banner carriers. As for the Mahomedan



SIN-KIANG'S CHINESE GOVERNOR-GENERAL WITH HIS STAFF AT KASHGAR'
 At the head of the provincial administration of Sin-Kiang is a Chinese governor-general, the *chiang-chun*, who is assisted by principal secretaries for foreign affairs—justice, finance, and so forth. Immediately under him four chief commissioners, called *taoyins*, administer circuits in Zungaria and Eastern Turkistan, and under each of these again are twelve *hsien-yins* or district officers

Photo, Miss Ella Sykes

portion of the towns, apart from a few mosques, flanked by minarets, and covered with façades of blue or green tiles, rarely is there in them a building with any architectural pretension.

The streets are simply a maze of intricate narrow winding passages, protected against the sun by straw matting stretched across the roadway and attached to houses on both sides; and shaded by these overhanging mattings are the booths, in which may be seen the owners, sitting cross-legged on a carpet on the ground, not infrequently dozing in the midst of their wares. The streets, however, always present

an animated appearance; what with men and women on donkey and horse-back, frantically crying "posh-posh" (get out of the way), pedestrians jostling each other, and diving under the noses of camels carrying on their backs huge bales that stretch across the entire width of the road, one may well wonder how a traffic so unwieldy can force its way through such congested arteries.

The dwelling-houses of the people are not more than ten or twelve feet high, and are made of sun-dried mud bricks, with mud floors and flat mud roofs. On the street side they present a bare wall, with a single door, but no windows, as



MONOTONOUS THROBBING TO THE TINKLE OF THIN WIRE STRINGS

In instruments of native manufacture the unsatisfactory nature of the music to European ears is due, as in the case of this wandering trio, to the paucity of tone. Lack of skill or contentment with old ways of making the sound-box of these weird guitar-like contrivances results in a nasal noise that grates upon the ear. The deep throbs of the drum provide a welcome contrast

Photo, Miss Ella Sykes

if the single idea of the owner is, once he is inside, to shut the outer world from him.

The house of a well-to-do person is invariably arranged in two parts, one for men and another for women. The portion for men, which is nearest to the house door, consists of a peristyle, or court, with a sort of veranda running round it, opened to the sky in the centre. Around this court are arranged a number of sleeping and sitting rooms. Carpets and felts are strewn on the ground of the veranda; but there is no other furniture. Here, in the peristyle, in shade in summer and in the warmth

of the sun in winter, the male members of the household say their prayers, lounge about, entertain visitors, setting before them a dastarkhan (a large coloured cloth spread on the floor, and on which are placed bread, sweetmeats, fruit, and cups of tea), and smoke their hashish pipes.

The women's apartments communicate with those reserved for the men by a single door, taboo to all of the male sex, except very near relations. These harems comprise no more than a few dingy, squalid rooms, with walls often grimy with soot—for the family cooking is done here—and with no light or air,



CHINESE YAMEN RUNNER IN GORGEOUS LIVERY DIGHT

Chinese officials in Sin-Kiang maintain much of the pomp and circumstance dear to the heart of the Oriental magnate. On ceremonial occasions they will be attended by heralds, footmen to clear the way, umbrella and standard bearers, and mounted troops. This imposing person is merely a Yahieh, or Yamen runner. The ideographs on the scarlet and yellow plastron on his coat indicate his rank

Photo, Miss Ella Sykes

except what is admitted through small skylights in the roof.

Nowhere in the world have women a more unfortunate lot than in Turkistan. Polygamy, limited to a maximum of four wives at a time, is permitted by Mahomedan law. But what is remarkable here, even for a Mahomedan country, is the extent to which the right of divorce is indulged in by the man. No reason need be assigned for a divorce. All that the man has to do is to say to the woman "I divorce you" three times, and the formalities are complete. He is free to cherish a new wife; and if she in her turn is divorced, on the expiration of the *iddat*, i.e., legal period of one hundred days prescribed by the Koran, she is free to attach herself to another man.

Such, in brief, are the Chantos—a people over whom even their best friends can hardly wax enthusiastic. Living in a country where food is plentiful and famine has never been known, they lead a life as monotonous as it is unenterprising, in the seclusion of their oasis-towns, and devoid of that national feeling which attaches the individual to the aggregate.

The provincial administration is presided over by the Chiang-chun (governor) at Urumchi (provincial capital), who is assisted by a number of chief secretaries, such as for justice, revenue, foreign affairs, etc. He has also control of the provincial troops, though by a strange anomaly the *Titai* (provincial commander-in-chief) is supposed to be his equal in rank, and affects to take no



PAINTED PORCELAIN FOR YARKAND HOUSEWIVES

In his younger days he followed the leather industry, which brought no small fame to Yarkand; now, with old age weighing heavily upon him and eyesight failing, he has adopted a gentler trade, and barter's chinaware in the market-place

orders from him. The *titai's* headquarters are not in Urumchi, but at Kashgar. Immediately under the governor are four *Taoyins* (chief commissioners), to whom are apportioned the circuits of Urumchi and of Ili-Tarbagtai (in Zungaria), and of Aksu and of Kashgar (in Eastern Turkistan).

Under each *taoyin* are some ten to twelve district officers known as *Hsien-yins*, and corresponding more or less to deputy commissioners in India; and again under each *hsien-yin* are a number of native Moslem *begs*, each of whom controls a special portion of a district. The district is the unit of administration, and the *hsien-yin* in his own district is a little king responsible for everything

SIN-KIANG & ITS PEOPLES

within his jurisdiction. Though the peoples of Sin-Kiang are Mahomedans, yet the rule over them of the Confucian Chinese is not unpopular.

In his dealings with the natives of these parts the mandarin shows great tolerance to native prejudices. It is a paradox, but it is none the less true, that in her very laxity lies one of the secrets of China's power in this Mahomedan country.

The government is there to collect taxes, to watch over public security, and to punish the grosser crimes; but it should have little or nothing to do with civil suits which can be just as well left to the Shariat—the Mahomedan religious court.

Another point Chinese officials are expected to bear in mind is the importance of good relations with those natives in the country who possess influence. China proper may be a Republic; but in Turkistan her government can only be described as a sort of oligarchy wherein the upper stratum of society lords it over the lower.

On this principle the Chinese govern largely through the *bais*, *begs*, *kazis*, etc., who represent the native aristocracy; and so long as these are content all is well, even if the common people be left somewhat to their oppression.

Cities Buried in the Sands

No description of Turkistan would be complete without a reference to its archaeology.

A great number of rivers having dried up on their lower reaches, many towns, once situated on their banks, have become a prey to the sands which are ever drifting against them, until at last they have been buried; and now their sites are an abomination of desolation. But, thanks to the desiccating air of Turkistan, all that the sands have hidden have been preserved from decay—and this for close upon 1,500 years. Now, under the direction of explorers

and archaeologists, in the forefront of whom may be mentioned Sir Aurel Stein, excavations have been carried on at a number of ancient sites in the Taklamakan Desert.

In what must have been an ancient cemetery, the bodies, well preserved, but quite dry, of some Chinamen were found, clothed in the picturesque garments of the Tang period (about the sixth century). Certainly no costumes so ancient have been preserved by the Chinese in China proper. Those unearthed by Sir Aurel Stein must therefore be quite unique; and, moreover, should afford valuable indications on the condition of the textile industry in China at a far-off period.

Treasures of Literature and Art

Manuscripts, too, have been extraordinarily abundant; and these, not in one, but in some twenty different languages. Those in Chinese, Tibetan, Persian, Syriac, etc., can still be read with more or less ease. But other scripts, such as those in Central Asian Brahmi, Manæchian, Oughur, and Tanguti are a mystery, save to a few European scholars. Some of the books found are medical treatises; others are fragments of certain Buddhist sacred writings, and others again are fragments in Syriac of the New Testament. All these records are written on paper, birch bark, white leather, wooden tablets, or on silk cloth.

Still more striking are the frescoes and wall-paintings that have been recovered from sand-buried Buddhist temples—all relics of great interest, because they indicate some of the stepping-stones by which the Graeco-Buddhist art of north-west India advanced through Turkistan to China and even to Japan. Here, therefore, in the Taklamakan Desert, we have a storehouse of bygone civilizations, and who knows what new pages of history still lie hidden under the sands?

END OF VOLUME VI.